

THE UNDYING GOSPEL FOR THE DYING YEAR

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”
Romans 5:6

BELOVED friends, whatever the condition of a child of God is, he is not without hope. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may be very sorely tried, his afflictions may be multiplied, and they may be very keen, but even in that condition, he has hope. It is not possible for him to be forsaken of God—his God must help him. If the worst comes to the worst, and he is altogether forsaken of men and sees no way of escape out of his tremendous difficulties, still his God must help him. He has no right whatever to be afraid.

The argument of our text is this—since the Lord Jesus Christ saved us when we were ungodly and came to our rescue when we were without strength—we can never be in a worse condition than that. And if He then did the best thing possible for us, namely, died for us, there is nothing which He will not do. In fact, He will give us all things and He will do all things for us, so as to keep us safely and bear us through.

The argument is that, looking back, we see the great love of God to us in the gift of His dear Son for us when there was nothing good in us—when we were ungodly, when we had no power to produce anything good—for we were without strength. At such a time, even at such a time, Christ came on wings of love and up to the bloody tree He went—and laid down His life for our deliverance.

We, therefore, feel confident that He will not leave us now, and that He will not keep back anything from us whatever we may need. He has committed Himself to the work of our eternal salvation and He will not be balked of it. He has already done too much for us to ever run back from His purpose. And in our worst estate, if we are in that condition tonight, we may still confidently appeal to Him and rest quite sure that He will bring us up even to the heights of joy and safety. That is the drift of the text and of the sermon tonight.

There are three grand points of consolation suggested by the text. The first lies in this one line, “*Christ died for the ungodly.*” The second lies in this sentence, *Christ died for us “when we were yet without strength.”* And there is a rich vein of comfort in the third statement, that *Christ died for us “in due time.”* “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Time is often a very important element when one is in trouble. In the nick of time, Christ came for our deliverance—and so He will again.

I. The first point of consolation in our text is this—if any child of God here is in sore dismay and bowed down by reason of trouble, fancying that God will leave him—let him first meditate on this word, “CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY.”

I should like to have this sentence put up at the corner of every street, “Christ died for the ungodly.” I am afraid that it would cause a great many observations to be made. Some would kick at it very heavily, but there are others who would leap at the sight of it very joyfully. “Christ died for the ungodly.” Does it mean what it says? The common notion, not expressed in so many words, but harbored in many minds, is that Christ died for the godly—that Christ died for good people—but the text says, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I say again that the current notion, unexpressed but still believed, is that Christ came into the

world to save saints. This is not true. He came into the world to save sinners, or to come back to the very words of the text, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

I remember reading of a young woman who had long been in great distress of conscience, and she found comfort from an utterance of Mr. Moody Stuart in prayer, when he quoted these words of my text, “Christ died for the ungodly.” She had never caught at that idea before—she had always been trying to see something good in herself and she thought that if she could spy out some good thing in herself then she would know that Christ died for her. It was like a new revelation when she really understood that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that He “died for the ungodly.”

Now this must be true, for Scripture puts it so plainly, “Christ died for the ungodly.” It must be true for in the first place, *there was nobody else to die for but the ungodly*. In this same epistle, Paul says that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, as it is written, “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

So he sums us all up with his sweeping condemnation, “None righteous, no, not one.” So that, if Christ had died for anybody, He must have died for the ungodly, since the whole human race has degenerated into that condition. And that is the state by nature of every man that is born of woman. Some are openly ungodly. Many are religiously ungodly, a very dangerous because very deceitful condition—having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. This first point is clear, then—Christ must have died for the ungodly since there was nobody else for whom to die.

And next, *only the ungodly needed that He should die for them*. If you are godly, if you are good, if you have perfectly kept the law of God, what have you to do with Christ? You are saved already. In fact, you are not lost, and so you do not want any saving. If you have kept all the commandments from your youth up, you may well say, “What lack I yet?”

If you are so good that you could hardly be better, and have a most respectable robe of righteousness of your own in which to appear before God, I ask again, What have you to do with Christ? Why should He die for a man who has not any sins that need washing away? O you self-righteous, look to the sparks of your own fire, for Christ will kindle no fire for you!

O you who believe your own characters to be all that they should be, and who rest your hope on that fallacy, I say again, why should Christ come to be a Physician to those who are not sick? Why should He come to give alms to those who are not poor? Why should He lay down His life to bear the sins of those who have no sins? “Christ died for the ungodly” because nobody but the ungodly needed that He should die for them.

There is one point that we must mark, *Christ did die for the ungodly*. His form of death was just that which the ungodly deserved—He died by sentence of the law of God, He died nailed to a gibbet—He died the death of a felon with a thief on either side of Him. He died in the dark, crying, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

He died, not as one who had Himself sinned, but He died as sinners have to die, for He took upon Himself the sins of the ungodly. And being found standing in their place, He felt the scourge of God that should have fallen upon the ungodly. Scourge, did I say? He felt the sword of God that would have slain the ungodly, as it is written, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Christ really died for the ungodly. They tell us that He died to confirm His testimony, in which respect His death is no better than the death of any martyr who dies to confirm his testimony. But the text says, “Christ died for the ungodly.” They say that He died as the completion of His life, which many a good man has done, and therein the cross has no pre-eminence. But the text says, “Christ died for the ungodly” and we shall stand to it that this is true.

“Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” “The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” They turn round and say, “That is your theory of the atonement.” I beg your pardon—it is the atonement. It is not a theory at all and there is no other

atonement but the substitution of Christ in the room, and place, and stead of the ungodly. He died the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

This is the true and only doctrine of atonement—and he that receives it shall find comfort by it—but he that rejects it does so at peril of his own soul. “Christ died for the ungodly.” I cannot speak plainer words than Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, has written. There let them stand, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

Now then, I want you, who are the people of God, to pick up the argument out of this truth. If Christ did this crowning act of dying for the ungodly, do you think that He will ever cast away the man who has peace with God? Read the first verse again, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now, if He died for you when you had no peace with God, when, in fact, you had no God at all—when you were ungodly, that is, not under the influence of God—when you were enemies to God by wicked works, if Christ died for you then, will He not save you now? If you feel within your heart tonight a sweet reconciliation to God your heavenly Father, then, whatever your trouble is, do not believe that God can leave you. Whatever the deep depression of your spirit, do not imagine that He can forsake you. He that died for you as ungodly will certainly save you now that you have peace with God through Him.

More than that, when you have read those words in the first verse, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” go on to the second verse, “By whom also we have access by faith.” Why, you are one of those who can go to God when you will and speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend! By faith you are permitted to come to God in prayer, and in praise, and to walk with God in the light as He is in the light.

Come, beloved, if Christ died for you when you were dead, when you were ungodly, will He, can He leave you now that He has given you access to the Father by Himself? You come in and out of His house like a home-born son—and if He loved you so as to die for you when you were a stranger to God—do you think that He will leave you now that you have access to God through Him?

Go on a little farther and you find it written, “and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” A little while ago, you know, you had no hope of glory—you had no expectation of ever getting to heaven. Poor soul that you were, your glory was your shame. Your glory was worldly pleasure and worldly gain. But now you “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” God has given you that good hope through grace.

Sometimes, when it is fine weather with you, you climb to the top of Mount Clear, and looking toward the Celestial City, you can almost see the light of it. Sometimes, when the wind blows the right way, you have heard some stray notes from the harps of angels—and you have wished yourself among them. Some of you know that the hope of glory has often burned within your heart.

Well, then, beloved, if the Lord has given you that hope, can He disappoint it? If Christ died for you when you had no hope, when you did not want a hope, when you were ungodly—think of the weight of this argument to you who rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is mightier than a thousand Nasmyth hammers, for it smashes every doubt to shivers. He that died for the ungodly will certainly save those who have a good hope of heaven.

Once more. You are, at this time, so far from being ungodly that the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you. You know that it is so—you feel that God loves you. If you do not feel it tonight, you have felt it. You have realized the love of God in your heart, as though a bottle of perfume of roses had been broken and the perfume had filled all your spirit.

You have said to yourself “Jesus loves me.” You have been overjoyed with that thought and you have also said, “I know that I love Him.” You have felt the goings forth of your spirit like the melting of the ice in the springtime. Every little brooklet that had been frozen up within your nature has leapt in gracious liberty beneath the sunlight of divine love. Well now, do you think that the Lord has ever taught you to love Him—and has shown you that He loves you—and yet will forsake you?

You say, “O sir, you do not know what my trial is!” No, I do not, but your heavenly Father does, and if He loved you when you were ungodly, will He cast you away now that He has shed His love abroad in your heart? “Oh, but I have lost the very staff of bread! I do not know how I am to get a living.” No, but

you have the living God to depend upon and after giving His Son to save you, He will surely give you bread. He will not let you famish.

“Ah, but my dear sir, the beloved of my heart is laid low! There is in the cemetery the dearest object of my affection.” Is it really so? I thought that He left the dead some time ago. I thought that the dearest object of your affection had gone up to the right hand of the Father. Is it not so? “Ah, that is not what I mean, sir! I mean that I have lost one whom I fondly loved.”

I know that you have, but do you think that the Lord has turned against you because He has permitted this trial to come upon you? How can He ever desert those for whom He died? And if He died for them when they were ungodly, will He not live for them now that He has shed His love abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost?

I cannot work this out for you. I want you to go home and work it out for yourselves. If any of you are cast down, here is the first well of comfort whereat you may drink full draughts of divine consolation—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Then He must help those who are trusting in Him.

II. Now we come to a second well, to see whether we can draw waters of comfort out of that also. According to our text, CHRIST DIED FOR US “WHEN WE WERE YET WITHOUT STRENGTH.”

I must only say a word or two, here, because the time will not allow me to enlarge. First, *we were naturally in a lost condition through the fall*, when we were born into this world, and we lived in it for years “without strength” to do that which was right. When we began to wake up a little to thoughts of God and things divine, we heard the truth preached, but we were still without power of access even to the Gospel.

We were told to repent, but our hard heart would yield no waters of repentance. We were bidden to believe in Christ—the preacher might as well have commanded the dead to rise out of their graves. Christ was set before us in all His beauty, yet such was our blindness that we could not appreciate His loveliness. The bread of life was put on the table before us, but such was our obstinacy that we would not believe it to be bread and we would not eat of it. We were “without strength.”

And further on, when the will came and the Lord began by His grace to work upon us, we had a will to repent, we had a will to believe, and we had a will to come to Christ—yet *we were without the graces which are now our strength*. I remember well the time when I had to say, “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.”

“I would, but cannot repent. I would, but cannot believe.” A rock was in the heart—a stone was laid over the mouth of the well of consolation. We were “without strength.” But when we were in that sad state, without one of the graces which are now our strength, without one of those holy fruits of the Spirit which are now the source of our consolation—even then, “when we were yet without strength,” Christ died for us.

When every sinew was snapped, every bone broken, every power gone, life itself evaporated—for we were dead in trespasses and sins—even then Christ died for us. Well now, brethren, this is true—do you believe it? I want you to get the argument out of this truth, for it is this—if the Lord Jesus loved us enough to die for us when we had no strength whatever, then He will certainly save us now that He has given us strength.

Just look and see what kind of strength He has given us. According to the context, He has given us peace. What strength is theirs who have peace with God! I can do all things when I know that God is on my side. Well, has He given me the strength that comes out of confidence in Him, and perfect reconciliation with Him—and will He now let me be destroyed by the enemy? It cannot be.

In addition to peace, He has given us access to Himself. What a strength there is in being able to go to God in prayer! By faith, we can go to God whenever we are in need. And am I able to go to my heavenly Father and tell Him all my trouble and cast my burden upon Him—and did His dear Son die for me when I was without strength and will He leave me now that I can go to Him in prayer? O beloved, it is impossible! I cannot imagine His turning against us.

Moreover, according to the third verse, He has now given us patience. We have had a deal of trouble, but it has worked patience. The Lord knows that at one time you had no patience at all. You used, like a

bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, kick every time He struck you, but now you often hold your tongue and quietly endure His chastening rod. Patience is a great strength to a man, or a woman, either—if you can be patient, you are strong. Well now, if Christ loved you so as to buy you with His blood when you were impatient, has He given you this strength to be patient under His hand, and do you think that He will destroy you?

And in addition to patience, He has given you a good deal of experience. I speak to ever so many of God's people here who are experienced Christians. You have gone up hill and down dale, you have tried and proved the faithfulness of God—you have known by experience your own weakness and your own folly—but you also know God's faithfulness and God's strength.

Do you think that the Lord has given you all this experience and then that He means to play the fool with you? Do you think that He gives and takes away, again, like little children in their play? What? Has He put you through all these paces and drilled you in this style and is He now going to drum you out of the army? No, no. Believe nothing of the kind. He that has given you patience and experience will keep you to the end.

And then, in addition to that, He has given you hope, for patience works experience and experience, hope. A hope that makes not ashamed. Has God really given you a hope? "Oh!" says one, "it is sometimes a very poor hope." Yes, but is it hope in Christ? Do you hope in His mercy? Then remember this text, "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

The smallest hope, if it comes from God, tremble as it may, is better than the proudest presumption that ever came from self-righteousness. If the Lord Jesus has given you a hope in His blood, a hope in His intercession, a hope in His eternal faithfulness, ah, believe me, if He loved you when you had no hope, He will never cast you away now that you have a hope that He has Himself given you!

Only once more upon this point. We read in the fifth verse of the "Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Now listen. If, when we were yet without strength, Christ died for us, will He not save us now that He has given us the Holy Ghost? Think of it, Christian. The Holy Ghost has come to live in you. Poor and despised, or illiterate and unknown, yet within you dwells the Spirit of God.

That body of yours is a temple—that is God's Word, not mine—"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Well now, if Christ bought you with His blood when you were no temple, but were a defiled place—I know not to what vile thing to liken you—will He let you be broken down now that He has made you a temple and the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in you?

I know that I must be speaking to somebody tonight in great trouble. I am sure that I am, I have it upon my soul that I am addressing some true child of God who is at his wits' end, driven to the utmost extremity of sorrow. Dear friend, believe in your God. Let not a doubt come in about Him. The Son of God died for you upon the cross when you were ungodly and without strength—and He cannot, must not, shall not, be suspected of any wish to cast you off, or of any possibility of change in His love to you.

My brother, I would say to you, in your trouble tonight, what Hopeful said to Christian when He was in the death-river and cried out, "I sink in deep waters." Hopeful said to him, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." So I feel the bottom, tonight, my brother, even if you do not—it is a good bottom and you will never be swept away from it if you are trusting in Jesus.

He that brought you into the water, if He makes the tide rise up to your chin, will teach you to swim. When you cannot walk any further, you shall find waters to swim in and there is no water so deep that the child of God can drown in it. You may go as low as the grave, but you will never go any lower. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is always One who is ready to catch you when you are at your very worst as to circumstances and trials. Wherefore, be of good cheer. Magnify God in the fire, and rest assured that He who gave Himself up to die for you, will never lose you, but will keep you even to the end.

Now I come to the last point, which is also full of consolation. I think that I heard someone heave a deep sigh and say, "Ah! It may be as you say, it may be all true, and I trust that it is, but I am in such trouble that if I do not get help directly, I shall be done for. I have, to cry, 'Make haste, O God, make haste for my help!' I want a God who can do what David's God did when 'He rode upon a cherub, and

did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.” That is the kind of God that you want, yes, and that is the kind of God that you have. He will come flying to your deliverance, as I will now try to show you.

III. Here is the third well of consolation, CHRIST DIED FOR US IN DUE TIME—“In due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

I cannot tell you how much marrow I have found in this bone, “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” The teaching of this verse seems to be something like this. It means, first, that *Christ died for us when justice required His death*. Suppose that I owe a debt? I am thankful that I do not, but suppose that I did owe a very heavy debt and that it had to be paid, say, on Tuesday morning, and there is a friend who has undertaken to pay it for me.

The bill is due at twelve o’clock and he says that he will pay it for me. Now suppose that my friend goes in on Wednesday morning and pays the amount. It is very good of him, but still, you see, I lose my reputation for discharging my liabilities “in due time.” I did not meet the bill on Tuesday at twelve. True, there are only four-and-twenty hours lost, but still, I am not the man that I was in the trade I follow—I have been a defaulter.

Now, I like to think of this fact, that I, a poor sinner, over head and ears in debt to God’s justice, have not only paid Him through my great Surety, but I have paid Him to the minute. “In due time” my Surety came and discharged my debt for me. “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

This verse also means that *Christ died in due time as to every believer*. In God’s Book of Remembrance there is no claim for demurrage or delay against any believing sinner. There is no note there saying, “This sinner’s Surety died after time.” No, but when justice demanded the debt, justice received full payment from that dear hand that was nailed to the cross for me.

“In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” It was the time appointed in the eternal decree, it was the time arranged in the everlasting counsels of grace—and Christ was there to the tick of the clock. He went up to the tree on the day when it was agreed that He should finish transgression and make an end of sin—and bring in everlasting righteousness. He made atonement—He died for the ungodly, “in due time.”

Well, now, do you see what I am driving at with you? You want help, you say, you want deliverance. Very well. The greatest help that you ever did want was for someone to stand and be a Daysman for you—and to pay your debts to infinite justice, and your Lord did it—and did it at the nick of time. “In due time.” Will He not, therefore deliver, you in due time?

Besides, He has given you patience—“Tribulation worketh patience.” He will help you before you have done with your patience. “I cannot hold out much longer,” says one. You shall not have any need to hold out much longer. The Lord is on the way to deliver you and before your stock of grace-wrought patience shall quite have run out, He will come to you.

Read the next word—“And patience, experience.” Your experience, as long as ever it will profit you, will be painful. But when it is no longer an experience that will do you good, it will not be painful. Remember how Paul writes in this same epistle, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” And if He has called you, He will let you suffer as long as the experience of the suffering will work for your good, but no longer. In due time He will bring you out of that trying experience.

And He will bring you out before your hope gets to be ashamed. Read those words again—“And experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.” The Lord will not let your trouble go so far that you will have to say, “I was deceived. I must give up being a Christian.” God will not leave you in the hour of need. He will help you in due time, before your expiring hope quite gives up the ghost. Be of good courage about that.

And He will come and help you while yet your love remains. Did I not hear you say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. He may flog me, but I am still His child, and I love Him, and I will kiss His hand, and His rod, too”? Well, well, if that is your language, He must come to help you in due time. He must deliver you before that love is driven out of your heart.

Yes, and let me say that while you are now without strength, He who died for you while you were without strength in the fullest sense, will come and help you. I thank God, tonight, as I have done many a

time before for being brought into great straits. Sometimes it has been very plain sailing for years. I remember once saying to myself, "Well, in former days, in the great needs for the College and the Orphanage, I have experienced wonderful miracles of deliverance. Then I seemed to step, like a giant, from the top of one mountain to another, right over the valleys. And now I go along the valleys gently and simply." I have half wished to see another lofty mountain and another yawning chasm open, that I might see what God would do—and *I have had them!*

During the last two years, though I have said little about them, I have had many a crevasse open up before me. The ice has seemed to split asunder and I have looked down into the blue depths. But I have gone on just as steadily, and God has made the way just as easy as if my path had all been as smooth as a lawn after the garden roller had been over it.

It is a glorious thing to have a big trouble, a great Atlantic billow that takes you off your feet and sweeps you right out to sea—and lets you sink down into the depths, into old ocean's lowest caverns, till you get to the foundations of the mountains—and there see God and then come up again to tell what a great God He is and how graciously He delivers His people. He will deliver you, He must deliver you. The argument of the text is this, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," therefore in due time He must help the godly.

Now I finish with two observations. First, the Gospel of sinners is the comfort of saints. If ever you saints want a bit of real comfort, you must just go to God as sinners. I do not think that there is anything better or wiser, whenever you really need to be solidly cheered, than to begin again where you began at first.

When the devil says to me, "You are no saint," I say to him, "Nor are you, either." "Ah!" says he, "You are a deceiver," and I reply, "And so are you." "Ah!" says he, "But you are mistaken, your experience has been a delusion, you are no child of God." "What am I, then? Tell me, if you know so much about me." "You are a sinner," says he. "All right, Satan! I thank you for that word, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So I begin again—and if you begin again like that, you will very often find that this is a short cut to comfort. If it comes to a question between the devil and you whether you are a saint or not, you will have a hard battle to fight, let me tell you.

One of you may say, "I know that I am a saint." Well, well, well, "let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." "Oh! but I know," says one. Very well, go on knowing it, but if the devil once gets you in the sieve in which he had Peter, I question whether you will know your head from your heels. Under a strong temptation, you will very soon begin almost to doubt your own existence. Instead of arguing the question of your saintship with Satan, who is an old lawyer and knows many things that you do not know, you had better say, "Whether I am a saint or not, I am not going to dispute. But I am a sinner and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Believer, when you were a boy, you used to drink at a certain old well. How cold the water was, how refreshing! When you feel very thirsty and the pumps are dry, go back to the old well, and get a draught of the living water there. I find that I have to do that every now and then. While I thank God for present enjoyments and sweet experiences of communion with Himself, I like to go back to the old well and just drink as I drank at the first.

I remember how I did drink the first time from that well, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." I think I drank so much that time that I was like behemoth, who trusts that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. There was much in that text, but there was none too much for me, and I seemed to drink it all in.

I recommend you to do the same—take a great draught of the grace of God tonight, thirsty child of God! Stoop down, with your mouth right over the well, for the living water comes springing straight up to your lips. And then drink as a cow drinks in the summertime, all that you can take in—and go on your way rejoicing.

The Gospel of sinners is the comfort of saints. That is one observation, and the other is this—the comfort of saints is the Gospel of sinners, for if the Lord has done great things for any one of His people, what reason is there, poor sinner, why He should not do the same for you? If the Lord Jesus Christ has

loved John Smith, why should He not love Mary Smith. And if the Lord Jesus Christ has saved Tom Jones, why should He not save Harry Jones?

I mean that since He does not love because of any worthiness in us, but simply because He wills to love us, as it is written, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” then you may come, you guilty ones, to this Sovereign Dispenser of undeserved mercy and touch the silver scepter of His grace and be saved tonight!

May His sweet Spirit bring you! Do not let any of us raise a question about whether we are saints or sinners, but let us all come together—let us come *en masse* to the cross, let the whole of us fly to Calvary now and stand and look up to Him, the eternal Son of God, bleeding and dying on the tree, and let us all believe now that He can, that He will, that He does save, nay, that He has saved our souls.

God grant us grace to do it, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 5

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with, God—*

It is a matter of present possession, and present enjoyment. Whatever tribulation there may be in the world, “we have peace with God.” Blessed be God for that glorious fact! We may not have peace with all men, though we would seek to have that, but “we have peace with God.”

1-2. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

So we ascend this golden ladder, from faith to peace, from peace to access with God, and from this to joy by the way of hope. Happy people, who know this blessed way of climbing out of the sorrows of the present into the glory that shall be revealed!

3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:*

Present trials even become subjects for thanksgiving. Surely, they have lost their sting when patience accepts them and faith rejoices in them.

3-5. *Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, and experience, hope: and hope maketh, not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Like a sweet perfume, which enters every room, and fills every nook and cranny in the house, so does the delightful love of God fill the entire soul when, by the Holy Ghost, it is shed abroad in the heart. Beloved, may you feel that blessed influence this evening! This next verse may help us to love God and to feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

He did not regard us as saints, but as actually ungodly, when He died for our redemption. It was not man’s righteousness that brought Christ from heaven, but man’s sin, and the infinite pity of God.

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

Though he were as just as Aristides, though he were renowned for justice, nobody would die for him. There is no such attraction in the virtue as would win anyone’s love, so as to die for the man who displays it.

7. *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

For a benevolent, large-hearted, kindly-disposed man some might dare to die. Such a thing is not likely, but it is possible.

8. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

We were without any attraction, without any righteousness, without any goodness, yet Christ loved us. Out of the graciousness of His own heart he loved us, according to that text, “I will love them freely.”

9. *Much more then,*

See how the apostle, when he had uttered a great truth, proceeds to say, something greater still. Just before, he had written, “And not only so,” and now he says, “Much more then,”

9. *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

If Christ died for us when we were sinners, will He not save us now that He has made us saints? If, when we were condemned, He redeemed us, will He not preserve us now that we are justified? This is a strong plea for the final perseverance and ultimate salvation of all believers

10-11. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so,*

The apostle is again up on the wing. He cannot fly high enough to describe all Christ’s work. “And not only so,”

11. *But we also joy in God—*

That is a delightful experience, joying in God himself, in the very character and person of God. So perfectly reconciled are we that, not only do we rejoice in God’s gifts, and in his mercy, but we swim in a sea of delight in God himself, “We also joy in God”—

11. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Now comes an admonition.

12. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Sinned, that is, in the first man.

13-14. *(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

I suppose that Paul refers even to little children, who “had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” and yet died as the result of Adam’s sin.

15-20. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon, all men, unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.*

Just as, sometimes, a physician may give a medicine which causes the disease to be more fully developed in order to its ultimate cure, so does the law make a discovery of our sin to us, and it also excites us to greater sin, by reason of the enmity of our nature, which is opposed to the law of God, and becomes the more active the more clearly the law is known, even as Paul says, further on in this epistle, “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”

20-21. *But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Blessed be His holy name! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—439, 734, 715, 538

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